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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S CALL ON RUSSIAN PERMREP VITALY
CHURKIN

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a wide-ranging and warm introductory meeting, Ambassador Rice and Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin discussed U.S. and Russian priorities for the UN, including Georgia, Zimbabwe, Burma, climate change, and the crisis in the Middle East. On Georgia, Rice conveyed the U.S. preference for another technical rollover of the expiring UN mission. She encouraged Churkin to consider Council action on Zimbabwe and Burma, and Churkin suggested a U.S./Russia-led Security Council mission to the Middle East to occur in April. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Russian PermRep Vitaly Churkin received newly arrived U.S. PermRep, Ambassador Susan Rice, for a one-hour, one-on-one meeting in his home on January 26. The wide ranging conversation was friendly and warm. Rice began by acknowledging the cordial telephone call that had taken place earlier in the day between Presidents Obama and Medvedev, and their expressed mutual strong desire to strengthen the bilateral relationship between Russia and the United States. She outlined for Churkin U.S. priorities at the United Nations: strengthening the capacity of the UN to engage effectively in complex peace operations; advancing U.S. leadership in addressing climate change; advancing our agenda on non-proliferation; and putting the U.S. at the center of efforts to support poverty reduction, development, and fighting disease.

¶3. (U) Ambassador Churkin welcomed the U.S. priorities and agreed with them. He said Russian national priorities were similar, and included addressing the challenges of peacekeeping in Africa, addressing climate change, and increasing the effectiveness of the UN. They agreed on the desirability of maximizing U.S.-Russia cooperation especially on issues of arms control (START) and non-proliferation and minimize differences (e.g. Georgia).

¶4. (C) Ambassador Churkin raised the upcoming expiration of the Georgia mandate. Rice said she hoped the U.S. and Russia could minimize opportunities for debate over the future of the expiring UN mission to poison the well. She emphasized that the U.S. wants to maintain clarity on Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that the U.S. would prefer a technical rollover in February. Churkin raised the issue of how the topic of the UN mission would be referred to in the February Programme of Work (POW). Churkin said he wanted it to read, "The UN Mission extended by UNSCR 1839" instead of "UNOMIG".

¶5. (C) Ambassador Rice expressed concern about violence against civilians in places like Zimbabwe and Burma, and said she thought stronger Council action is needed in those situations. Churkin said he thought the Council needed to be cautious about infringing in the internal affairs of sovereign nations and needed to be clear about when intervention is appropriate. In such cases, he said, Russia follows the lead of regional states. Rice pointed out that internal conflicts often have regional peace and security

considerations, and the Council had long established precedents for getting involved in similar situations, citing El Salvador, Cambodia, Liberia and Mozambique as examples. She also pointed out that in the case of Zimbabwe, regional states are divided on what action should be taken, though less so with Burma. Ambassador Rice suggested it is perfectly appropriate for Russia, as a major power, to form independent views of the situation that could be informed by-- but not dictated by-- the regional players.

¶6. (C) Turning to climate change, Churkin pointed out that it is possible to see the effects of climate change on Saint Petersburg, which he said could sink into the sea. However, he suggested that the Security Council should not play a large role in climate change, which he thought would be more appropriately dealt with in other fora. Churkin also raised the global financial crisis and suggested that a debate in the General Assembly would present an opportunity for countries who were not heard from in the G-8 and the G-20 formats to voice their concerns. Ambassador Rice said she was open to considering the possibility.

¶7. (C) Ambassador Churkin offered his views on the Security Council role in the crisis in the Middle East, saying he had seen the Council paralyzed for the last 2.5 years, but constructive movement in the last six months. Asked for her view, Rice said she thought if the Security Council could act in a balanced and constructive way in support of the Quartet's objectives, then there could be some benefit from having the Council engage, but if Council action were to be unbalanced and anti-Israel, then Rice thought it unhelpful to preserve a role for the Council. Churkin asked Rice to

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consider a U.S./Russia-led Security Council mission to the Middle East as a way to signal our joint leadership in the Council on this issue. The mission would include stops in Israel, Ramallah, Egypt, Lebanon and possibly Syria. Ambassador Rice said the U.S. could consider the idea, but timing of the mission would need to be considered in the context of developments on the ground. They agreed it would be good to forge common ground on issues of shared interest. Rice